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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USUN NEW YORK 000511

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/09/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KPKO](#) [UNSC](#) [SY](#) [LE](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: LEBANON: IDF GENERALS BRIEF UNSC MEMBERS ON  
HIZBALLAH BUILD-UP IN UNIFIL AOR

REF: USUN 245

Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro D. Wolff, per 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) IDF Generals Yossi Baidatz and Yossi Heymann briefed UNSC delegations June 5 on Israel's assessment of the situation in south Lebanon and the performance of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) peacekeepers. They said Hizballah had fully re-armed in south Lebanon since summer 2006 and now possessed 30,000 rockets in UNIFIL's area of operations. Although they praised UNIFIL for "improving the strategic environment" in south Lebanon and said there is "no comparison" between the old UNIFIL and the new force, Baidatz and Heymann said there is more UNIFIL could do to fulfill its mandate, including by taking action independent of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and by searching for Hizballah weapons caches inside Lebanese villages and homes. They complained that instead of focusing on the "real issue" of Hizballah re-armament and its violations of UNSCR 1701, the international community seems obsessed with "marginal issues" like Israeli overflights of Lebanon, the IDF's occupation of the Lebanese portion of the village of Ghajar, maps of cluster bombs in south Lebanon, and the status of the Sheba'a Farms. Warning that a clash between Israel and Hizballah is "inevitable" unless UNSCR 1701 is fully implemented, they urged the international community to take action immediately. Most delegations reacted with concern to the charges laid out in the Israeli briefing, although the Italian delegation and others took exception to Israel's characterization of UNIFIL's performance, given their view that UNSCR 1701 requires UNIFIL to act in support of the LAF. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The Israeli Mission invited all UNSC Middle East experts and military advisers to a briefing on the situation in Lebanon June 5 by the head of the IDF's Military Intelligence research division, Brigadier General Yossi Baidatz, and the IDF's representative in the tripartite talks with UNIFIL and the LAF, Brigadier General Yossi Heymann. Although all UNSC members were invited, Libya and Indonesia did not attend. This was the latest in a series of briefings the Israeli mission has provided to UNSC missions since 2007.

Re-armed Hizballah in South Lebanon  
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¶3. (SBU) Using aerial imagery and video footage of arms transfers to illustrate his point, Baidatz argued that Hizballah had fully re-armed in south Lebanon and north of the Litani since its summer 2006 war with Israel. (Note: The Israeli Mission said Gil Rabinovich at the Israeli Embassy in Washington could share Baidatz's presentation with interested USG officials. End Note.) He said Hizballah now possessed 30,000 rockets south of the Litani with ranges of up to 115 kilometers, two-thirds of which it acquired after the August 2006 war. It also has sophisticated anti-tank rockets, which he said were made in Russia and sold to the Syrian Army, and

then transferred to Hizballah against Russian Government policy. According to Baidatz, Hizballah has 2,500 trained activists in south Lebanon. North of the Litani, the group has "hundreds" of Fajr (75 km range) and Zilzal (250 km range), which can strike almost all parts of Israel. Since Hizballah can no longer operate in the open due to the enhanced UNIFIL presence, it has constructed command and control posts underneath houses inside south Lebanese villages (Baidatz showed several aerial photos of bunker construction in progress).

#### UNIFIL Trying, But Not Hard Enough

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¶4. (SBU) Although they praised UNIFIL for "improving the strategic environment" in south Lebanon and emphasized that there is "no comparison" between the old UNIFIL and the new force, Baidatz and Heymann said there is more UNIFIL could do to fulfill its mandate, short of directly attacking Hizballah. They complained that UNIFIL had become less assertive in carrying out its mandate in the past few months, after Hizballah reacted to new UNIFIL measures put in place to prevent rocket firings from south Lebanon (reftel), and after UNIFIL troop contributors decided not to antagonize Hizballah during the recent crisis in Beirut. Noting that all the intelligence included in the briefing had been passed to UNIFIL, Heymann said that when UNIFIL alerts the LAF, the intelligence is immediately passed to Hizballah and therefore compromised. Given this dynamic, they argued that UNIFIL should take action independent of the LAF. They also suggested that UNIFIL enter Lebanese homes to look for and disable Hizballah bunkers and arms caches. At the very

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least, they said, UNIFIL should paint a "true picture" of the situation in south Lebanon by acknowledging Israel's concerns. Baidatz and Heymann were very upset in particular about recent comments by UNIFIL spokesman Milos Strugar to the Lebanese press to the effect that there is "no visible Hizballah presence in south Lebanon.8

#### International Community Must Act

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¶5. (SBU) Warning that a clash between Israel and Hizballah is "inevitable" unless UNSCR 1701 is fully implemented through more robust efforts by UNIFIL, Baidatz urged the international community to take several steps in the next few months: 1) influence UNIFIL to fulfill its mandate in south Lebanon, 2) increase pressure on Iran and Syria for illegal arms transfers into Lebanon, 3) establish an international mechanism to prevent arms smuggling into Lebanon by air, sea, and land borders, 4) refuse any dialogue with Hizballah, 5) stop focusing on "marginal" issues like the status of Ghajar, unexploded ordnance in south Lebanon, or the Sheba'a Farms (more below), 6) encourage UNIFIL to coordinate with Israel in the event of an "emergency" in south Lebanon, and 7) ensure that UNIFIL paints a true picture of the situation in south Lebanon in its reports to the UNSC. Heymann asserted that UNIFIL discounts Israeli information about Hizballah's capabilities and activities in south Lebanon, and attributed this reaction to the fact that Hizballah has adapted to UNIFIL's presence and the peacekeepers no longer have a good sense of what is actually happening on the ground. UNIFIL must adapt in response to Hizballah as well, he said, to keep the group on its toes.

#### Ghajar, UXO, and Sheba'a "Marginal" Issues

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¶6. (SBU) Heymann complained that instead of focusing on the "real issue" of Hizballah re-armament in south Lebanon and its violations of UNSCR 1701, the international community seems obsessed with "marginal issues" like Israel's occupation of the Lebanese portion of the village of Ghajar, maps of cluster bombs in south Lebanon, and the status of the

Sheba'a Farms. On Ghajar, Heymann said Israel had agreed to UNIFIL's proposal to resolve the issue last year, but was then told that PM Siniora had rejected it. Before Israel accepts the UNIFIL plan, Heymann said, it wants a written notification that Lebanon now supports the plan. On cluster bombs, Heymann said Israel had provided two sets of data to the UN, which contained the data the IDF would use to ensure Israeli soldiers are protected in the event of renewed hostilities in south Lebanon. The "detailed strike data" the UN wants, Heymann asserted, took ten years to assemble in Kosovo and would take the IDF more time as well. (Note: This was the first time we or the UN had heard such an explanation. End Note.) On Sheba'a, Heymann said Hizballah had invented the issue as a pretext to continue the "resistance." Even if Israel were to withdraw from Ghajar and Sheba'a tomorrow, he emphasized, nothing would change in Lebanon. Hizballah would still retain its weapons, continue to threaten Israel, and the world would look away once again.

#### Concerned But Skeptical Reaction

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¶17. (SBU) Most delegations reacted with concern to the charges laid out in the Israeli briefing, although some disputed the characterizations of UNIFIL's performance, as well as other aspects of the presentation. The Italian military attache, rejecting the suggestion that UNIFIL was not fulfilling its mandate, read aloud from UNSCR 1701 to demonstrate that UNIFIL was empowered only to assist the LAF. Israel could not expect UNIFIL to enter Lebanese homes on its own to look for weapons caches. The Russian expert welcomed any additional information on alleged Syrian transfer of Russian-made weapons to Hizballah, but emphasized that such transfers -- if they are taking place -- violate Russian policy. He also asked why Israel is negotiating with Syria if the information in the briefing is true. The Belgian expert disputed the Israeli characterization of Ghajar, overflights, and cluster bomb maps as "marginal issues" and insisted that Israel must recognize the service UNIFIL peacekeepers are rendering and acknowledge that even the IDF could not degrade Hizballah's capabilities sufficiently during the 2006 war.

Comment: Need USG Reality Check

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¶18. (C) After the briefing, USUN asked Baidatz and Heymann

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privately what specifically they want UNIFIL to do, recognizing that troop contributors and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) believe that UNSCR 1701 requires coordination with the LAF. The Generals replied that they understand that "UNIFIL will not fight Hizballah," but that it should "keep it on its toes," by minimizing the risk that the LAF will give Hizballah advance warning of UNIFIL actions and by putting pressure on areas in south Lebanon where Hizballah is thought to be re-fortifying. When Poloff recounted Amb Khalilzad's March 12 conversation with UNIFIL General Graziano (reftel), including Graziano's report that he now gives the LAF only 30 minutes advance notice of sensitive operations and closes off different areas at night from which rockets have been fired in the past, the IDF Generals said those policies were positive and UNIFIL should continue such efforts.

¶19. (C) USUN will continue pressing Graziano personally, when he comes to New York, and DPKO to ensure that UNIFIL fulfills its entire mandate and takes the charges in the Israeli briefing seriously. In order to advance Israel's concerns effectively with the UN Secretariat, however, we should also be able to say whether the USG shares the IDF assessment of the situation in south Lebanon. Is the UN wrong when it says that there is no large-scale transfer of weapons south of the Litani and that its nearly 12,000 ground troops would be able to detect such transfers at the Litani and elsewhere? Is the

Israeli assertion correct that UNIFIL does not even have enough information to make such an assessment because Hizballah has learned to adapt to the UN's presence and the peacekeepers have been passive in response? Does Hizballah now possess 30,000 rockets -- more than it had before the summer 2006 war -- south of the Litani? If so, we must also engage UNIFIL troop contributors in capitals to ensure they understand the seriousness of the situation in south Lebanon and are prepared to act to address it.

Khalilzad